

ANONYMOUS

Witness Name: **GRO-B**

Statement No: WITN2887001

Exhibits: 0

Dated: March 2019

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF **GRO-B**

I, **GRO-B** will say as follows:-

Section 1. Introduction

1. **GRO-B**

Section 2. How Affected

2. I make this witness statement in relation to my husband **GRO-B: H** who was infected with HIV, Hepatitis B and C as a result of being given infected blood products. **H** has given a statement to the Inquiry. His witness number is **NOT RELEVANT**.
3. **H** and I first met when I was 17 and he was 19. Our relationship became serious quite quickly.
4. After we had been dating for a few weeks, we were driving somewhere. I remember that he pulled over and said he needed to tell me something. He

ANONYMOUS

told me about his infections. I was very young and naive at the time and didn't fully understand what [H] was telling me and the implications of his infections. He told me that he understood if I didn't want to be with him. As I liked him and wanted to be with him, I didn't take it too seriously, but I didn't appreciate at that time the impact [H]'s infections would have on my life.

5. We got on so well and I think that we got caught up in a new relationship. Looking back, I think that we put [H]'s infections to the back of our minds. At that stage, I don't think [H] realised the consequences either. [H] wanted to get married and have children, like most people of that age.
6. [H]'s statement details the background of his condition, how he became infected, his treatment, his infections and how he was told about his infections.

Section 3. Other Infections

7. As far as I am aware [H] has no other infections.

Section 4. Consent

8. [H]'s statement deals with his views on consent. I didn't know [H] at the relevant time.

Section 5. Impact

9. Physically, [H]'s HIV is slowly killing him. He has tried to live a normal life as best he can. He suffers with aches and pains the day after if he physically exerts himself. We both try to live a normal life as possible.
10. [H]'s mental state has got progressively worse over the years. There are times when things really get to him and I have to take myself out of the situation, due to his anger and frustration. I want to take the pain away, but I can't. [H] is so resentful of his life.

ANONYMOUS

11. [H] is 6 ft. 5" and built like a brick wall. To see a man like that in his 50's on the floor crying is heart breaking. Our son [GRO-B: S] is only 17 and he shouldn't see [H] like that, but as he lives at home, he can't get away from it.
12. [H] and I haven't told [S] about [H]'s infections. We don't know when to tell him and whether we should tell him. We are worried about the effect it would have on [S] if we told him. [S] is only 17, which is how old I was when [H] told me about his infections and I didn't really understand them at that age.
13. [H] hides his infections from people and this has had a big impact on him. If he appears low, people tell him to snap out of it, but [H] can't tell people the reason he feels low and why he can't just "snap out of it".
14. Mentally, [H] needs to stay active and keep busy. He has recently lost his job due to complications following a hip replacement. He is hoping to find work again once he is well enough.
15. When [H] had his shoulder replaced he was off work for 5 years. This was a dreadful time and had a big impact on our relationship. We regularly argued.
16. As a result of his Hepatitis C, [H] has scarring of his liver.
17. In 2003, we were on holiday in Spain when [H] became very unwell with pneumonia due to his HIV infection. He was in hospital for 11 days. Our son [S] was only young then and this was difficult as I couldn't take him into intensive care. Fortunately, my brother and sister and law were with us at the time. I ended up flying home to leave [S] with my mum, so that I could fly back out to Palma to stay with [H] until he was discharged.
18. [H] has developed a chest infection again recently.
19. I refer to [H]'s statement regarding the treatment he has received for his infections.

ANONYMOUS

20. He has had no difficulties in accessing treatment to my knowledge.
21. I do not know whether there were any treatments which ought to have been made available to [H] which weren't.
22. As a result of his combination therapy for Hepatitis C, [H] has peripheral neuropathy. He finds it hard to fall asleep with the symptoms he gets from this. The loss of sensation in his hands and his feet is very worrying for him.
23. Shortly, after [H] was in hospital in Spain, he trialed an HIV drug which knocked him for six. He went from being a big well built man to dropping so much weight he looked shocking. He was half the man that he was.
24. As to whether [H]'s infections have impacted his other medical treatment, [H] is currently having ongoing treatment due to complications with his hip replacement. If his appointments are cancelled, which they have been, [H] questions whether because of his participation in the Public Inquiry, the hospital are pushing him to one side or whether their excuses of being short staffed are genuine.
25. [H] has got to make sure he has had factor before he can have dental treatment. [H] can only go to dentists who have been recommended by the hospital. It's not straightforward.
26. [H] has to attend a sexual diseases clinic for his HIV treatment. He says he feels so dirty sitting with prostitutes, drug users etc. I feel so sorry for him.
27. As regards [H]'s social life, he hasn't told any of his friends about his infections to my knowledge. He holds back on going on holidays with his friends, due to the complications this would involve with having to administer his treatment. He also couldn't keep up with their drinking. His friends know about his Haemophilia, but not his infections.
28. When [H] first started his treatment at Bradford Royal Infirmary he met another man called [GRO-B: F] who was also having treatment. They became best

ANONYMOUS

friends and they vowed to battle through their infections and treatment together. [F] sadly died some years ago. [H] found this very difficult and has been lost without him since he died.

29. [H] doesn't really talk to me about his health as he doesn't think I understand. I don't think he feels that he can talk to anyone. I think he feels isolated and alone.
30. [H] stays in a lot. He has really reverted to being like a child and can often appear quite helpless. It sometimes feels with [H] like I have a second child.
31. When we were younger, we were advised by doctors not to have children due to [H]'s infections. We initially followed this advice, but we both really wanted a child and eventually decided to try to conceive.
32. It is stressful for both [H] and I not knowing what future holds for us and the potential implications for [S] and I.
33. [H] and I are so happy to have our son [S]. We both would have liked more children, but [H]'s infections stopped us. As [S] is an only child, we have had to lie to him over the years as to why he doesn't have siblings.
34. [S] knows that [H] has Haemophilia. However, keeping [H]'s treatment for his infections secret from [S] over the years has been very difficult. We have had to worry about having [H]'s treatment in the fridge, but we now have a separate fridge for this.
35. [H] tells me little snippets about his youth. He has told me that he felt different and that he knew he was different from his friends because of his infections. From what I've heard from [H] his infections stopped him doing a lot of things when he was younger.

ANONYMOUS

36. [H] has got to his 50's. Being in hospital regularly and having his infections have taken a lot out of him.
37. As regards the impact on me, I find dealing with [H]'s infections mentally excruciating and draining. I bury my head in the sand. If I didn't, I would have a nervous breakdown if I thought too long and hard about it.
38. I took [H] on when I was 17 and very naïve. We got engaged and married. We had a really good relationship when we first met. I love him, but I feel that over the years our relationship has got hard.
39. There have been times when I have wanted to walk away from our marriage. How heartless would that make me with everything [H]'s going through? I sometimes feel that I only stay with him out of pity. It shouldn't be like that, I shouldn't have to feel sorry for him.
40. We have had good times, but we should still be having them now that [S] is older. We can't go for things like weekends away. We can't book holidays, as we don't know how [H]'s health is going to be. It is unbelievably hard, especially when I see my friends living normal lives.
41. I have told my best friend about [H] infections and she will often ask me how things are. It's nice having someone that knows about our situation that I can talk to. [H] would be angry if he knew that I had told somebody, but it is my way of dealing with it. [H] has the Haemophilia society to talk to. I need someone that I can confide in.
42. I don't think we have experienced any stigma as we have kept [H]'s infections private, as we don't know how people would react to them.
43. I get anxious and cringe if I see anything about the contaminated blood scandal or the Public Inquiry on TV, as I worry that people will put two and two together as they know [H] is a Haemophiliac and accuse him of being infected. It will be a stressful time for us and I will be a nervous wreck when the Inquiry receives a lot of media coverage in 2019.

ANONYMOUS

44. I am particularly anxious about this due to my hairdressing business. My business could get shutdown with a few concerns from clients. My business has been operating for 7 years. My business partner passed away 2 years ago and I have been running it on my own for 2 years.
45. [H]'s mum died a few years ago. Deep down she was very soft, but like [H]'s Dad, she was very angry inside about [H] being infected. However, due to the secrecy about [H]'s infections, this is something they haven't been able to express. My mum knows about [H]'s infections. She is the same as me and buries her head in the sand and doesn't talk about them.
46. As most people we know don't know what we are dealing with, we have to present a strong front with our friends and the people we know. We must appear like a real happy go lucky family on the exterior and this is all people see. People don't know what we are going through. It can be exhausting trying to keep up the façade.
47. I have known most of my customers for a long time. My customers are lovely and they know [H] as we live in a relatively small community. However, given the nature of my job, I get into conversations about my personal life on a daily basis. As [H] has recently been in hospital due to his hip, I have got into discussions about this and explained that [H] has lost his job, but I have to stop there so that the conversation doesn't stray towards his infections.
48. I feel that I constantly have to lie to cover up [H]'s infections and resulting issues. I feel that I have to lie all the time to people I have known for years, which is incredibly stressful, as you have to remember what you have told different people. I hate smiling at people and lying to their faces, that's not me. I love my job and have to take every day as it comes. I often feel as if I just want to switch off at work, but I can't.
49. I am totally drained and exhausted on a daily basis. I just want to switch off when I get home and not talk to [H]. That isn't right. It shouldn't be like that. I

ANONYMOUS

think I feel like this due to the stress of covering up about [H] at work, as well as the general stress about [H] and his health.

50. After all these years of marriage, I feel as if my future is to be my husband's nurse.

51. As regards the educational effects on [H] he has done a lot of studying in later life to make up for what he missed out on when he was younger. I understand that he and his parents didn't take his studies too seriously as a child, due to the stress of finding out about his infections and not knowing what the future held for him.

52. [H] spent a long time working for his dad. This worked well, as his dad let him take time off for hospital appointments. Those were some of [H]'s happiest years. When [H]'s dad closed his business [H] felt vulnerable. He had to hide his infections when trying to get a new job. He didn't want to lose another job. This was very stressful for him and had a big impact on him.

53. [H] gets anxious in jobs when he needs time off for hospital appointments, but can't give employers reasons for why he needs to attend so many appointments.

54. [H]'s employment history hasn't always been very stable, due to his health. He was in his last job at the Mill since August 2018, but he recently lost this job due to the problems he has had with his hip.

55. I pay the mortgage when [H] is not working. I work longer hours to make ends meet and keep a roof over our heads.

56. We live in a small 2 bedroom bungalow where we have lived for 18 years. We don't want to move house, as we have never known what the future holds for us financially. We don't want to commit to a property that we can't afford. I feel that we should have a bigger house like our friends have progressed to and I find it frustrating that we can't. Why shouldn't we have what everyone else has?

Section 6. Treatment/care/support

57. [H] has had counselling. He doesn't discuss it with me, so I don't know how he has found it.

58. [H] did ask me once if I wanted to go to counselling with him, but nothing came of it. I don't know if this was a direct invitation from the counsellor. [H] said it in an argument.

59. I do feel as if counselling might help me.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

60. [H] has always dealt with any financial assistance we have received. We have never abused the assistance. [H] is sometimes reluctant to claim for things I think he should, such as a replacement bed/bedding which we need due to the terrible night sweats he experiences.

61. When [H] applies for financial assistance, he has to get quotes. I think the grants of assistance should be made more freely. The Trusts and Funds are there to assist people who have been infected by contaminated blood, it's not like the victims are making an insurance claim. I don't think the victims should have to provide quotes.

62. In my view, the infected Haemophiliacs are entitled to every penny they get, given what they've been through. You can't put a price on a life.

Section 8. Other Issues

63. I don't think the contaminated blood scandal should have got to this point. The victims shouldn't have to be fighting like this. They didn't ask for the situation they are in.

ANONYMOUS

H has lost numerous friends from his Haemophilia Centre. As a community, I feel that we're forgotten about. It's a massive scandal. I don't know how this has been going on for so long and we now have to go to a Public Inquiry. Why has it gone this far?

Anonymity

65. I wish to remain anonymous.

66. I do not want to give oral evidence to the Inquiry.

Statement of Truth

I believe that the facts stated in this witness statement are true.

Signed

GRO-B

Dated.. 27-3-19